

Destination: Atacama Desert, Chile.

Dates: June 19 - June 30. (U.S. Departure: June 19, 2006).

Visas: Are not required, but there is a \$100 one-time fee for entering Chile, payable at the airport, just prior to Passport Control. Before you stand in the big line for passport control, you must pay the \$100 fee, or they will make you go back to pay it and then back to the end of the line.

Vaccinations: Nothing special. You do not need to worry about malaria. Standard yellow fever, hepatitis and other vaccines that you probably have already gotten from travel to other locations should be enough. A Tetanus booster would be highly recommended if you haven't gotten one in the last 5-10 years.

Flight information: You will have to fly to Santiago de Chile from the US, and then hop a transfer flight to Antofagasta, Chile. American Airlines is your best bet for a required U.S. carrier. Their flights to Santiago fly via Dallas or Miami as an overnight flight, getting into Santiago in the morning the next day. After clearing customs, you will catch the next flight to Antofagasta. American Airlines has only one code shared flight to Antofagasta on LAN Chile, but this flight is in the afternoon (2pm departure), while there are in fact several flights throughout the day from Santiago to Antofagasta on Lan Chile. We have had mixed luck with booking this afternoon flight and successfully changing to the first flight in the morning. Sometimes they have let us change without change fees and other times LAN would not allow the change without a pretty hefty change fee. Don't expect to be able to convince LAN to make the change when you get to Santiago without a change fee. Your best bet, if you can swing it, is when you are booking the flight through American, try to get them to book you for the earlier flight (they may not be able to since the only code share is the afternoon flight), or, keep the afternoon flight, check your luggage through when you get to the airport, put the rest in a locker, and take a van into the city and see a little bit of Santiago for a half-day. Chris has done this in the past, and it has worked out very well. Don't forget to get back to the airport in time for your afternoon flight!!!

Car Rental: Antofagasta

The best companies to rent from really are Budget and Avis. National/Alamo are also located in Antofagasta, but I do not recommend them. Their cars are not very well taken care of and we've had significant problems with their cars working well. On the other hand, Budget and Avis are more expensive, so keep that in mind. While these cars can be rented on the websites, I've always called directly to Chile/Antofagasta in order to ensure that they both have the cars as listed and to ensure that the reservation is at the actual site of pick-up. This has worked quite well. If you need help, we can help you with that reservation, just contact us and we'll help you out as best as we can.

Depending on your needs, you will probably want to rent a 4 seater open bed pickup truck (4 doors, 4 seats, and a standard pickup bed). These come in a two-wheel and four-wheel drive version. Or, if you want to splurge, you can get an SUV which are generally Toyota 4 Runners and Mitsubishi Monteros. Final note:

All drivers *must* have an international license to go with your U.S. license in order to be able to rent or drive a car in Chile. The rental car agencies will ask for this, so don't forget it!!! AAA (in the U.S.) sells these for about \$20 plus a photo. If you are coming from another country, sorry, can't help you, but check in your country for where you can get one of these. Each driver ***must*** be listed as allowable drivers on the rental contract in order for the insurance to be valid (a mandatory part of the contract).

Camping or Hotel: Here you have your choice. If you prefer, you can stay in a hotel and drive out to the desert each morning. It's only an hour drive each way. There are usually researchers on these trips who stay in a hotel and drive out each day, so this is perfectly acceptable. On the other hand, camping is hardly camping since the desert research center has a working toilet, a kitchen with a gas-stove, a propane-powered refrigerator, running water, and a bathroom with a toilet and a shower. As an added bonus, the night-sky in the desert is really amazing and I highly recommend you stay at the site as much as possible.

Hotel: If you prefer the hotel option, there are two good options. The first is the Holiday Inn Express and the second is the Hotel del Amalgro. Either is very nice and includes a good buffet breakfast. If you need help with reservations, let us know.

Camping: You will need to bring your tent, sleeping bag, and ground matt. It will be late fall in the Desert on this trip, which means warm days and cold nights. I recommend a 3-season bag and tent as a minimum. I have a three-season sleeping bag and tent, but needed a capalene top and bottoms in order to keep warm while sleeping, but I get cold quickly while others sleep in the open, no tent, with just a sleeping bag and are fine.

Getting to the Yungay Desert Research Station from the Antofagasta Airport: If you are not planning on getting a rental car let us know as soon as you can so that we can arrange to pick you up at the airport. If you are getting a rental car and driving to the research site, this is a little tricky as there aren't much by way of road signs. If this is your first trip to the Atacama, the best plan is for one of us to meet you at the airport in order to ensure that you are both getting the right vehicle, as well as to guide you out to Yungay. This is especially important for those of you who don't speak Spanish. Let us know your needs and we'll do our best to coordinate your arrival. If you get there and there is nobody to meet you, don't worry, we haven't forgotten, we'll be there soon. There is a small restaurant to get a drink and sandwich in the main part of the airport where you can wait. If you give up waiting and go into town, leave a message for Chris McKay or Liza Coe at the Holiday Inn Express letting us know where you are and we'll catch up with you as soon as we can.

Food:

We work on joint meals. We will go to the store on the way out to the desert and buy drinking water, ice, and food. We have ice-chests and a refrigerator for the perishables, and will need to make ice-runs every couple of days. There is a large BBQ at the center as well as a gas-stove. We make joint meals as well as have lots of stuff to make sandwiches, etc. Generally it is an eat-what you see, first come, first serve deal. But we have lots of everything so eat what you want when you want and we'll get more when we need it. If you have special dietary needs, please let us know and we'll accommodate you as best as we can. We usually have one or two vegetarians each trip, so don't worry about getting enough to eat. We will take care of you.

Building: it is a wooden structure with concrete floors. There are 5 rooms: 3 labs, 1 kitchen, 1 sleeping room plus a bathroom with a shower. Everything is dusty and dirty, so do not expect a "clean" room to work in. There are benches in the main lab-room that can be cleaned up well enough to do most sciences. One of the rooms will be dedicated to sleeping, but let us know in advance if you want to sleep there instead of bringing a tent or staying at a hotel so that we can coordinate enough sleeping space. One of the labs will be dedicated to the Ames communications team this trip, so please let us know your lab-space needs so that we can coordinate that with the rest of the science staff that are showing up.

Power: the power is supplied by several gasoline powered generators. All are 120 VAC generators with U.S. power specifications. We are expecting to have enough power for everybody, but if you think you have a need for more than 1000 watts of power or need 220 VAC, please need us know quickly, so that we can assess our overall power needs. We generally shut the power down at night, so if you have an overnight power need for samples, this is also something we would like to know about in advance.

Low Temp Sample Storage: The refrigerator/freezer (propane-powered) is available for sample storage in the case that you need low-temp storage, and functions 24 hours/day. But there is not much room which is shared with food, so keep that in mind.

Bathroom/Hygiene: There is 1 toilet and 1 shower for everybody. Do NOT expect to take a shower EVERY day unless you really need it. There is no hot water heater. However temperatures during the day get hot enough so that a warm shower is possible in the afternoon. There are also several gas-stations 30 minutes away which have hot-water showers for a reasonable price (and are well cleaned). We generally have to go for gas for the trucks and generators every other day, so you can tag along on that if you insist on a hot-water shower.

Water: All drinking water is bottled and brought in from Antofagasta. The natural running water at the site is *only* used for cleaning in the kitchen and bathroom. *DO NOT* drink it!!! The water contains a low level of arsenic, so it is only used for cleaning.

Weather: Cool in the morning (60 to 70°F) hot in the afternoon (80 to 100°F), cool at evening (60 to 70°F) cold at night (30 to 50°F). It is DRY and sunny, of course (about 60 percent of the U.V rays get through), so bring lotion and sun block. There is quite a bit of late afternoon wind.

Clothing: Always depending on your needs. As you can see from the weather, you will need to plan for a wide range of temperatures. Bring light, long-sleeved shirts, long pants and a wide-brimmed hat to keep you out of the sun during the day. At night, a gortex coat with multiple layers underneath (capalene or other long-underwear, t-shirts, sweaters, etc.) should be enough to keep you warm. Gloves and a knit hat for the night are also good things to have along.

Other things to Bring: In addition to a tent, sleeping bag, sleeping matt, and clothing previously mentioned, bring SUN BLOCK, deodorant, lotion, wet wipes, and a towel. Don't forget a personal water bottle and a head-lamp and/or flashlight (and extra batteries). For those of you who are making the drive up to Antofagasta from Santiago, please bring 3-4 music CD's of music of your choice; however, keep in mind that Amish Disco-Polka will not be tolerated in any of the vehicles and the driver has absolute, non-negotiable veto power over any music choice. There is no guarantee that CD players will be in any of the vehicles, but please bring them anyway because it is a long drive and they make good drink coasters, at the very least.